the ACTION reporter

American Council To Improve Our Neighborhoods

Volume I, No. 7 February, 1957

ACTION's Board Elects Seven New Directors

Seven new members were elected to ACTION'S Board of Directors at its January 9 meeting, bringing the total membership to 71.

"Election of these directors is in keeping with the policy of broadening the base of representation and support for ACTION's work as a catalyst in the burgeoning urban renewal movement," said Andrew Heiskell, Chairman of the Board of ACTION, and publisher of LIFE. The Board is composed of leaders representing a cross-section of national interests — industry, finance, labor, education, public service, civic and trade organizations.

The new directors are:

Thomas F. Patton, president, Republic Steel Corporation, Cleveland.

Mr. Norman Chandler, director and assistant publisher, Los Angeles *Times*.

J. Howard Edgerton, president, California Savings and Loan Association, Los Angeles.

C. George Dandrow, vice president, Johns-Manville Corporation, New York.

Milton C. Mumford, executive vice president, Lever Brothers Company, New York.

Walter W. Patchell, vice president, Pennsylvania Railroad, Philadelphia.

James E. Lash, executive vice president of ACTION, New York.

National Experts Lined Up For ACTION's Midwest Renewal Clinic

ACTION Correspondents Help Build Clearing House

Some 250 groups in over 100 cities in 33 states have appointed Correspondents for ACTION, as this issue of The Reporter goes to press. They range from home owners associations and local Leagues of Women Voters to Chambers of Commerce and city-wide housing and planning associations, indicating that community improvement and urban renewal are becoming firmly established in both individual neighborhoods and communities.

Aim of the Group Correspondent program is to inform ACTION of local needs and accomplishments in order to maintain a national clearing house for local activities, determine local needs, and get useful resource materials into the hands of local groups.

The feed-back from Correspondents is helping ACTION realize the clearing-house aim more and more. Some of the successful undertakings, such as Dayton's Mobile Information Center, reported in the newsletter, have sparked similar plans in other cities, while locally-produced publications sent in to The Reporter and

(See "ACTION Correspondents," page 4)

Local Actions Result From Cambridge Meeting

More than 20 national experts from Federal, state and local government, business, professional and trade associations and citizen groups will participate in ACTION's Midwest Urban Renewal Clinic, in Dayton, Ohio, March 14-15.

The Clinic will follow the pattern so successfully used at the Clinic ACTION held in Cambridge, Mass. late in 1956.

Civic leaders, local officials and professionals attending the Clinic will be able to share experiences and ask questions of the experts at 10 informal workshop sessions, as well as in individual conferences. These simultaneous sessions will be held twice both days, allowing participants to cover as many as four.

Over-all theme will be "How to Finance and Expedite Urban Renewal" with a different specific topic covered in each of the down-to-earth workshop sessions.

Three case histories from different communities — Baltimore, Cleveland, Dyersburg, Tenn. — illustrating various successful approaches to a local program, will be presented at the dinner session.

Reports from participants in the Cambridge Clinic show that over 98 per cent would like to attend a follow-up session next fall, and reveal specific local actions that resulted from contacts made there.

The managing director of the Holyoke, Mass., Chamber of Commerce, Frank Schneider, met consultant Morris Fleissig at the Clinic, brought the Newark, N. J., expert to Holyoke, and reports that this "may have been the spark needed to ignite our program."

Miss Agnes Coleman, head of the Newark, N. J., Commission for Neighborhood Conservation and Rehabilitation, reports that as a result of her meeting W. Beverly Mason, FHA Special Assistant for Urban Renewal, at Cambridge, Mr. Mason and a group of officials visited Newark, helping expedite the community's certification for Federal assistance.

Registration blanks for the Dayton Clinic are available from ACTION.

Legislature To View "Our Living Future"

For the first time, a state legislative body will view "Our Living Future," ACTION's dramatic film and lecture presentation on what cities can do to fight blight and slums.

This unique showing will take place before a joint session of the State of Washington's House and Senate in Olympia, on February 11. An urban renewal enabling bill was presented to the legislature in January.

Sponsorship of the legislators' showing is also extraordinary, with committee members including Governor John Chorberg, the Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House, and President of the Association of Washington Cities.

In the San Francisco Bay area, where it played before large audiences in four cities, "Our Living Future" passed the halfway mark in its round-the-country tour, having traveled some 26,700 miles — more than once around the world. There was an extra morning showing before a group of Oakland business leaders, called together by Mayor Clifford Rishell.

At a luncheon following it, they heard ACTION's Board Chairman, Andrew Heiskell, speak on "The Businessman's Stake in Urban Renewal." Mr. Heiskell was introduced by Los Angeles realtor Fritz Burns, an ACTION Board member.

Sears Foundation To Award Planning Fellowship

Chicago — Graduate fellowships in the field of city planning and urban renewal will be awarded this fall by The Sears-Roebuck Foundation, Theodore V. Houser, president of The Sears-Roebuck Foundation and chairman of the board, Sears, Roebuck & Co., has announced.

The Foundation will make a grant of $17,500 the first year of the program followed by annual grants of $35,000.

It is anticipated that these funds will permit the awarding of at least five two-year fellowships each year. If the average stipend should prove to be less than $2,500 per year, a larger number of fellowships will be granted, Mr. Houser said.

In addition to the grant to the student, schools attended by Sears-Roebuck Foundation fellowship holders will receive an unrestricted $1,000 per year during the period the student is in residence.

Fellowships must be used in graduate city planning schools that provide a two-year program leading to a degree.

"Through the educational efforts of such organizations as ACTION the nation has become increasingly alert to the vast problem of urban decay. As a result more and more municipalities are seeking trained people in the field of urban renewal and city planning," Mr. Houser pointed out.

Hopes for More Programs

"This year only 170 graduate students will enter this field, while an estimated 500 are needed and the demand will continue to rise.

"Through these fellowships the Sears-Roebuck Foundation hopes to increase the flow of trained personnel into this field and strengthen the nation's graduate schools of city planning. We are also hopeful that other corporations will set up similar programs."

Selection of candidates will be made by a committee consisting of Martin Meyerson, Vice President of ACTION; Dennis O'Harrow, Executive Director of the American Society of Planning Officials, and Edwin S. Burdell, President of the Cooper Union for Advancement of Science and Art.

The program will be administered by The Sears-Roebuck Foundation in cooperation with ACTION and the American Society of Planning Officials.

Applications for 1957-58 fellowships are due by March 1, 1957. Awards will be announced on or about April 1.

For information and application forms, write to The Sears-Roebuck Foundation, c/o City Planning Fellowship Program, 3333 Arthington Ave., Chicago 7, Ill.

ORGANIZATIONS IN RENEWAL

Below is another statement by a national organization with an active urban renewal program, describing for readers of The ACTION Reporter its particular functions and resources for local groups:

The American Municipal Association is the professional society of municipal government. Combining research, information and action, the AMA is dedicated to the sole objective of making it easier for responsible officials to run their cities. It represents 12,230 municipalities in the U. S. and its territories.

The AMA has an Urban Renewal Committee to assist the membership in determining its national shelter policy, as adopted in its annual National Municipal Policy. This guides municipal officials, acting through their state leagues of municipalities and the AMA, build their legislative programs in city councils, state legislatures and Congress. The 1957 Policy calls for increased Federal aid for slum clearance and urban renewal from two-thirds to four-fifths of net project cost.

Highway Program Related

Work sessions for municipal officials, held at the annual congress, have emphasized urban renewal activities as a decisive force in the development of better cities.

Most of the 43 state leagues of municipalities affiliated with AMA also carry on active urban renewal activities.

The AMA believes that there should be maximum coordination between the closely related urban renewal and urban highway programs. As one way of implementing this policy, the AMA's Highway Committee is sponsoring, with the American Association of State Highway Officials, a series of meetings in each of the 48 states to acquaint officials with the impact of the highway program on urban renewal and other local activities.

The semi-monthly *American Municipal News* keeps AMA membership informed on latest developments in urban renewal. Special articles explaining the Federal statutes and procedures for municipal participation in grant-in-aid programs are written by experts for use in the magazines which the state leagues publish.

Municipal officials can obtain information and assistance from the AMA research and information center maintained at 1313 East 60th Street, Chicago 37, Ill. Periodic staff surveys are made of new urban renewal developments and techniques at the operating level.

The main office of the American Municipal Association is located at 1625 H Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

(The work of other national groups assisting communities in renewal is described in Report from ACTION No. 10, "Sources of Aid.")

Demonstration Projects Focus on Citizen Role

Development of citizen understanding and participation is the subject of four pilot projects being carried out under the Demonstration Grant program of the Federal Housing Act.

The findings of two of these projects, nearing completion in Dyersburg, Tenn. and Boston, will be made public next month. (A preview of the Dyersburg study can be found on page 3.)

Aim of the demonstration grants, authorized by Section 314, is to encourage localities to test, develop and report new techniques for blight and slum prevention. The Federal government grants two-thirds of the total project costs to a public body, which can supply the remainder in either cash or services.

A citizen organization or other non-public body may put up the local one-third, as occurred in Boston. There, the Housing Association of Metropolitan Boston, Inc., a Red Feather agency, contributed $16,500 in services, under subcontract to the Massachusetts Department of Commerce, which received the Federal funds.

In all, 18 different pilot projects in communities around the country are seeking new techniques for renewal under the Demonstration Program. These are summarized in a report just released by the Urban Renewal Administration. (See Reading for Renewal). The report indicates the wide variety of subjects being studied, as well as public bodies contracting for the projects.

For further information about Demonstration Grants, write to the Housing and Home Finance Agency, Urban Renewal Administration, Washington 25, D. C.

Correction!

Please note: In January, The ACTION Reporter incorrectly referred to the *Urban Development Guidebook* published by the Chamber of Commerce of the United States as the *Urban Renewal Guidebook.*

To Honor Volunteers

National recognition for outstanding volunteer service to the community and nation again will be given by the Lane Bryant Annual Awards in 1957. Both individuals and groups are eligible for one of the two $1,000 awards.

For information and forms to enter this year's contest, which closes March 19, 1957, write to Lane Bryant Annual Awards, 465 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, New York.

Tennessee Town Opens Door to Renewal

Dyersburg, Tenn. — This month, all the main roads leading into town will be posted with new four-by-eight foot signs reading "Dyersburg Opening the Door to Progress Through Urban Renewal."

The signs, financed by contributions from some 15 different civic groups ranging from six garden clubs to the Chamber of Commerce, are visible evidence of the remarkable progress made in a short time by this pilot town of 12,500 on the road to renewal.

They also mark completion of a year-long Demonstration Grant project, conceived and directed by the Tennessee State Planning Commission, under Section 314 of the Federal Housing Act. Its lessons will soon help other communities of 10-25,000 population ready their citizens for renewal. Already neighboring towns, like Union City, Tenn., are putting its new techniques to work.

Some high points of the demonstration have been previewed for The ACTION Reporter by Dyersburg attorney J. M. Boyd, Jr., who took a leave of absence from his law practice to serve as Coordinator of this important civic undertaking. (Mr. Boyd will report on the program at ACTION's Midwest Urban Renewal Clinic at Dayton).

When the Dyersburg Demonstration Project opened its office last April, urban renewal meant next to nothing to the community. Staff members' first job was to contact civic groups, city departments, lending institutions, construction firms, citizen leaders, to explain what renewal could mean to Dyersburg. In all, 35 different groups heard the story.

Students Survey Housing

A committee of citizens who knew the town intimately was then organized to establish neighborhood boundaries, and in May a clinic on Federal legislation was held for business and municipal leaders. Rallies further oriented the public.

Reception of the new idea was favorable, and in June the comprehensive survey of Dyersburg's 4007 dwelling units to obtain information about the community's housing began.

As it turned out, the survey did a great deal more than obtain needed housing statistics. One crucial factor was the decision to hire college students, home for the summer, to do the interviewing. They had a personal interest in the survey's success and were not met with the distrust often accorded an outsider. It also developed that the surveyors had to explain to almost every householder they interviewed why the survey was being made in the first place.

The students proved unusually apt interpreters, on and off the job. A public opinion survey taken that summer revealed that 35 per cent of the people knew about the program, and of that group, 65 per cent had learned about it through the comprehensive housing survey.

Although the local newspaper and radio stations frequently carried news of the project, no other medium of communication had the impact of these personal contacts.

DOOR-Openers Appointed

Another far-reaching decision was to have the survey staff in specific neighborhoods consist of people who could assure greatest cooperation from those interviewed. Impressed by a program which employed surveyors who were close to their problems, residents in those areas gained confidence that something was going to be done about their housing conditions. When organization of the nine neighborhood associations began in August, they were eager to participate.

To meet the need for a better communications system with the community, the idea was conceived of using DOOR-Openers, named after the project's new title — Dyersburg's Opportunity Of Renewal or DOOR. These individuals, representing the various Dyersburg organizations, serve as liaison between DOOR and their own groups, insuring a two-way flow of information, and are valued highly by town officials today.

Despite the success of this and other initial undertakings, however, the citizen on the street still didn't know what urban renewal was all about. He had no concrete example in the way of slum clearance or public housing, and some antagonism had begun to develop among groups which didn't like to think their town had slum conditions.

The Dyer County Fair, the first week in September, offered DOOR the opportunity to change this.

Just the week before, results of the housing survey had been published. It revealed such shocking facts as that 30 per cent of Dyersburg's homes had no inside tub or shower, 33 per cent no hot water, 19 per cent no inside sink.

The Turning Point

To bring home these statistics to an unbelieving public, DOOR took a booth at the Fair and displayed photographs of Dyersburg homes which suffered from these conditions. When visitors to the DOOR booth — one of the big hits of the Fair — found they could identify almost every home, their disbelief turned to astonishment and indignation that these conditions had been allowed to exist.

This single display was the first concrete proof the people had that Dyersburg needed urban renewal and it changed the thinking of a large segment of the population in a week's time. DOOR was now ready to shift into high gear, and citizen committees and officials began to play the major role in the development of Dyersburg's urban renewal program.

The many other original and "exportable" techniques DOOR has used to develop citizen understanding and participation in a small community will be detailed in a manual its staff is now preparing. It will be available on request about March 15, from the Tennessee State Planning Office, Cordell Hull Building, Nashville, Tenn., or the Urban Renewal Administration, Housing and Home Finance Agency, Washington 25, D. C.

Capital Program Shaped By Philadelphia Citizens

Philadelphia — For the fourth consecutive year, in 1956, a committee of a leading citizen organization helped determine planning and timing of public improvements, a key municipal problem vital to urban renewal.

City Council drew extensively on the 55-page analysis* of the proposed Capital Program which the Public Improvements Committee of the Citizens' Council on City Planning submitted after intensive investigations and study.

In fact 15 of the 25 projects the citizens recommended for deferment, involving $2,894,000 of city funds, were acted on accordingly.

In 1957, the citizens' committee will try to influence Capital Program decisions even before department heads submit requests to the City Planning Commission, and will start meetings with them this month.

(For free copy write to Aaron Levine, Exec. Dir., Citizens' Council on City Planning, 1717 Sansom St., Phila. 3, Pa.)

Reading for renewal

National Publications

"Beginning to Attack Slums," BUSINESS WEEK, January 5, 1957, pp. 58-62. Reports current progress, and steps being taken to eliminate delays and snags in the Federal urban renewal program. Emphasis is on provisions for redevelopment of slum areas by private capital.

"Philadelphia Does It: The Battle for Penn Center," by James Reichley, HARPER's Magazine, February, 1957, pp. 49-56. A case history of one of the most dramatic transformations in urban redevelopment. Vividly details the struggles and healthy compromise achieved by city planners, architects, financial and real estate interests, a citizen committee and determined Mayor to rebuild downtown in the public interest.

Government Publications

A Guide To Demonstration Grants, tells how to apply and what activities are eligible for Federal assistance under Section 314 of the Housing Act of 1954.

A Report on Urban Renewal Demonstrations, summarizes 18 pilot projects undertaken up to December, 1956, under Section 314.

(Both available free from Urban Renewal Administration, Housing and Home Finance Agency, Washington 25, D. C.).

Urban Renewal . . . What It Is, a revised edition of HHFA's pamphlet for the lay citizen, gives essential facts on the Federal program.

(Available for 10¢ a copy from Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C.)

CORRESPONDENTS' SWAP-SHOP

(Successfully-used, locally-produced publications which may spark an idea or suggest a solution for citizen groups and officials of other communities).

"Guide to City Planning in New Haven, 1955," was first published in the monthly *Journal* which the Union & New Haven Trust Company distributes to its depositors. This attractively-presented guide brings to life the city's plans and accomplishments. Initiated by the bank and developed in cooperation with the City Plan Commission, which used a reprint to explain its program to citizens, the pamphlet indicates the kind of participation that may be obtained from civic-minded business groups.

(Available free from Mary Small, City Plan Commission, 177 Church St., New Haven, Conn.)

"How To Conduct a Meeting," was written up by E. Walter Hudson, past president of the Center City Residents Association of Philadelphia, to meet the requests of newcomers to the organization field. Full of helpful tips, its subtitle — "so many worthwhile causes are ruined due to uninteresting meetings," indicates that this may be a stitch-in-time for many newly-formed groups.

(6 pp. mimeo. Available free from Center City Residents Association, Room 310, 2027 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia 3, Pa.)

(Let The ACTION Reporter have your group's Swap-Shop contributions, with a brief description of its development, use, and price, if not free.)

ACTION Correspondents

(Continued from page 1)

listed in "Correspondents' Swap-Shop" are helping fill a need in many cases.

Sometimes, projects reported by o group have answered the need expresse specifically by another, as in the case of a New Hampshire man who wrote about his town's growing problem of larger homes being turned into rooming houses. What to do about it, he asked?

Several days before, a project answering his very need had been reported to ACTION by a Philadelphia Correspondent. ACTION put the New Englander in direct touch with the Quaker City group for more details.

Any organization which has an active program for neighborhood and community betterment is eligible to designate a Group Correspondent, who will be mailed up to 15 copies of The ACTION Reporter each month for distribution to key members, plus "bonus" mailings of useful resource materials. In return, the Correspondent is requested to keep ACTION informed of his group's activities in urban renewal.

February Bonus For Group Correspondents:

1. The **Sears Urban Renewal Observer.**
2. Lane Bryant Annual Awards Announcement.
3. **Sidewalks,** Information Bulletin produced for the Detroit Committee for Neighborhood Conservation and Improved Housing.
4. **Sources of Aid:** Information and Assistance for Citizen Housing and Community Development Organizations. (Report from ACTION R-10.)

(Be sure to get in on these bonus mailings, many of them not generally available, by naming your group's Correspondent for ACTION.)

ACTION
American Council To Improve Our Neighborhoods
Box 462, Radio City Station, New York 20, N. Y.

Stanley B. Winters, Pres.
26 Shanley Ave.
Newark, N. J.

D

(151) 202